

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

Chairman
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THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL GENERAL ASSEMBLY

For those who are not familiar with the background of the issues and the debate much that takes place at the General Assembly seems scarcely newsworthy. The Twelfth General Assembly was no exception, although matters of critical importance were taken up and dispatched in an orderly manner.

The sermoner at the opening service of worship, substituting for Bishop Yashiro, was Dr. Kozaki who related the work of the Council to the growing ecumenical concern with "mission and unity". He spoke of the call to the laity to "be the Church in the world", and the challenge to the clergy to enquire if their theology be not too academic; this call and this challenge had recently been presented, he observed, by Hans Eber who was in Japan for three weeks as Chairman of the WCC Committee to the Laity, and by Dr. Walter Marshall Horton, visiting professor of theology at Doshisha University.

Elections

The election of Takeshi Muto to the Chairmanship of the Council brought the first change in this office since the Council's reorganization after the war. A former moderator of the United Church of Christ, he was the delegates' choice by a wide margin of votes. The Rt. Rev. Michael Hinsuke Yashiro, Presiding Bishop of the Seikokai, and The Rev. Mr. Yamauchi a Lutheran pastor, were elected vice-chairmen. The Rev. Messers Tasaka and Bruns were appointed recording secretaries. In his opening office, the new Chairman spoke appreciatively of Dr. Kozaki's long and effective service as his predecessor.

Procedural Matters and Many Reports

Considerable Assembly time is devoted to ordering items on the agenda for discussion, for other procedural matters and for the handling of reports. The first of these to be given are those of the General Secretary and of the Executive Committee, followed by those of various committees and departments of the Council. They may all be referred to in the volume of reports prepared for the Assembly. Questions and interpolations were not extensive on most reports and they were received substantially as given.

New Member of the Council

The newly organized Baptist Domei was voted admission to the Council. The qualifications of this group, formed among the churches formerly associated with the Eastern Baptist Convention had been reviewed and endorsed for recommendation to the Assembly, and admission was voted after some criticism was voiced about the inadequate way in which background information on the Domei's candidacy has been presented. Mr. Sugaya of the Domei later expressed appreciation on behalf of his group, and pointed out that this year is the 150th anniversary of the beginning of Adoniram Judson's work in Burma and of Baptist mission in the Far East.

Resolutions

A resolution on offering felicitations to the Crown Prince and his bride on the occasion of their wedding was passed and referred to the next Executive Committee for appropriate action. The resolution includes the proposal of presenting the royal couple with a Bible.

Other resolutions passed were, one expressing appreciation to the NCE-SSA, through the Chairman and Secretary, Bishop Shot Mondol and Mr. Nelson Chappel, for the part Japan was privileged to play as host of the World Convention on Christian Education held here last summer. The other resolution or statement expresses the Council's firm opposition to the current movement in some circles to reinstitute state support of the Ise Shrines. The Statement makes clear the apprehension that this movement means a threat to "the freedom of religious belief" and a denial of the Constitutional principle of separation of religion and state.

In Memoriam

As part of the opening service of worship on the second morning of the Assembly, following devotions led by the Rev. Mr. Shimamura and

sermon by the Rev. Mr. Yuya, there were brief memorial exercises for the Rev. Akira Ebizawa and the Rev. Timothy Aoki. Special prayers were offered by Dr. Kozaki and Bishop Takase, recognizing the unselfish service these men had given the cause of Christianity and the Council. They invoked God's gracious comfort and protection for their survivors and His guidance that we may all follow in their good example. The Rev. Torimichi Ebizawa, son of the late General Secretary acknowledged this action of the Council with appreciation, and spoke of his father's devotion to the Christian Movement in Japan and the world.

General Secretary's Successor

The resignation of Mr. Kiyoshi Hirai as the General Secretary of the National Christian Council was put before the Assembly but was not accepted. It was urged upon Mr. Hirai to reconsider and to continue in his post for the time being, in as much as a proper successor could not be found. With the change in the office of Chairman and in view of the seriousness of matters before the Council at this time, an experienced hand is required in the General Secretary's position, it was stressed. Appropriate action is to be taken by the next Executive Commission.

Reorganization Study Inconclusive

The special committee appointed by the Executive Committee to undertake a review of the structure of the Council and to investigate in particular the financial situation and fiscal policies reported that it was unable to determine on any definite proposals to put before the Assembly. It said that the conclusions it had so far reached after many meetings of the full committee and smaller committees were the following: that the structure should be simplified and those "activity departments" which permitted the change might better be reorganized as committees of the Council under the direct administrative responsibility of the General Secretary; that demands of time and money on the Council's constituent bodies for the work of the activities departments be curtailed; that the independence of the departments be carefully guarded against and the organization of the Council be reconsidered to bring it in line with the original purpose of being a deliberative body. In pursuance of a committee recommendation, it was decided to continue study by the special committee which was charged to draw up definite proposals for presentation to the Executive Committee and in turn, to a special Assembly of the Council.

Grave concern has been voiced about the financial situation and fiscal policies of the Council, especially about its continuing deficit and the ofttimes necessity to "rob Peter to pay Paul" in order to meet payments. There was considerable debate concerning ways and means for support of the Council, the proper administration of funds and the determination of auditing and financial review. Out of this came the proposal that the several activity departments assume responsibility for raising over a million yen (¥1,200,000) of the general budget, an income heretofore sought through "contributions". Economies and strict accounting are to be enjoined upon all committees and departments. Significant is the appearance in the new budget of a previously non-existent item, for work outside the Council in connection with its growing ecumenical responsibility, an item of ¥350,000. Accounting will be audited by a group of four auditors, two more than provided for in the by-laws, at least one of whom will be a professional auditor.

The general budget of the Council and the budgets for the Centenary were passed without much debate. But question was raised, in the latter connection, about the disproportion in amounts to be paid into this budget by the United Church and the Seikokai.

Special Funds Problem

The right to determine the use to be made of a sum of \$15,000 contributed to the Church School Department from the WCCE was held not to rest entirely with that Department. Although the money is recognized as being for the purpose of promoting Christian Education in the Church in Japan, final decision on its use rests with the Executive Committee of the Council, it was maintained, and should come under consideration by the committee of Nine (finally augmented to twelve persons).

Miscellany

The 100th Anniversary program was reviewed and the plans for special features such as the Centenary Ceremony proper, the regional celebrations and the designation and perpetuation of the major sites of the history of Christianity in Japan, were discussed and endorsed.

A telegram of appreciation and blessing was approved for sending to R. E. Stanley Jones and his associates, now in the midst of their evangelical campaign in Japan.

Gratitude was expressed formally to The Rev. John Masatake Fujita for his years of distinguished leadership as executive of the Church School Department.

Following a vote of appreciation to Aoyama Gakuin for making available the place to hold the Assembly, the Twelfth General Assembly was brought to a close with a period of worship.

REPORT VOLUME OF WORLD CONVENTION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

A handsome volume giving a comprehensive report of the events in connection with the 14th World Convention on Christian Education, held in Japan last summer, is off the press. It is an attractive and well-bound book, with legible type and satisfactory format. Here one can find the salient facts about the preparation and conduct of the principle activities of that historic month, from mid-July to mid-August, focusing on the great gatherings at Aoyama Gakuin and the Sendagaya Athletic Center; not only so, but the story includes also some account of the years of preparation and months of followup.

An enterprise of such scope, including the World Institute at Kobe and the Church and Group Life Laboratory at Kiyosato, the Conventions of Asian leaders in the fields of audio-visual education, Christian literature and youth work, not to mention the Convention proper which met for a week in Tokyo and was itself the occasion of a variety of special group gatherings, can be reported only in most summary fashion in a book of 195 pages. Therefore, what the volume gains in comprehensiveness it must sacrifice in the fascinating detail and anecdote which those who attended the events will remember. The story is flattened out as it were,

Nevertheless, delegates and observers will welcome this resume of happenings they were so much in the thick of, they could not, as the saying goes, appreciate the forest for the trees. For many such this may be the first overview to put the many events into perspective. For those who had not the privilege of attending this volume will afford the precise view of what took place during the busy month, certainly the most significant month in the history of Christian Education in Japan, to date.

Various aspects of the Convention have been fully reported elsewhere and it is neither necessary nor advisable to review the contents of this volume except to say that it will recall to mind the persons, places and activities and, in summary fashion, the content outline of the principal addresses and discussions. The photographs used for illustration will help in this regard, although they are of varying quality and one wishes there were more of the better ones.

If any single aspect of the report deserves special mention, perhaps it is the tribute paid to the many whose tireless effort and cooperation made the Convention possible, in particular those who were responsible for the raising and administering of the budget. It is a matter of great satisfaction, for example, that the portion of the funds contributed by the local churches was more than the expectancy by several million yen.

